

Brian Hasler

Indiana State Representative, District 77



Spring, 2002

Dear Friends:



The 2002 short session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended. Although I'm very disappointed that the tax restructuring and budget bill was not successful, I would like to share some information with you about several important pieces of legislation that did pass.

This newsletter will address education funding, a new Housing Trust Fund for Evansville, landlord-tenant law reform and legislation that will better prepare Indiana to respond to the threat of terrorism.

I look forward to sharing more information about the outcome of this session with you in the upcoming wrap-up newsletter. If you have concerns or questions about these issues or about state government, please contact me. You may send e-mail to H77@in.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-382-9842.

Sincerely,

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Representative Hasler works to bring Engineering Program to USI

After speaking with business leaders in the Evansville community, Representative Hasler was convinced of the need for an expanded engineering program at the University of Southern Indiana. Unfortunately today, many of our best and brightest students are forced to travel to out-of-state universities to obtain engineering degrees. History shows that when students leave the state for their education they most often do not return. Realizing we need to keep our young people in Indiana to grow our economy, Representative Hasler helped lead the debate and testified before the Commission for Higher Education and the Senate Education Committee.



The University of Southern Indiana

The Commission recently approved a resolution which establishes a framework to address the need for engineering programs in southwestern Indiana, using existing faculty and resources. Some of those points include:

- USI developing a pre-engineering curriculum with Purdue University, in which a student would attend USI for two years, then transfer to Purdue or the University of Evansville for two more years.
- USI could retain its degree in Engineering Technology with its existing options or consolidate those degrees into a B.S. in Manufacturing Technology.
- USI and Purdue could offer a collaborative engineering program offered at the USI campus.
- Purdue could develop Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering programs at USI.

Educating and retaining professionals in Indiana is one of Representative Hasler's priorities. Offering an affordable, accessible engineering program on a par with any other in the country brings a tremendous opportunity for the educational and economic growth of southern Indiana.

Hasler supports bills giving schools funding solutions

Representative Hasler is very disappointed that as a result of the Senate's failure to act on House Bill 1004, action on the state budget was not taken during this Session. Unfortunately this means that Governor O'Bannon must make additonal cuts to the budget, including cuts in education.

Representative Hasler actively supported House Bill 1196, which gives schools the flexibility of tapping into their capital projects, transportation operation and school bus budgets in order to cover General Fund expenses. This means that in a budget shortfall, schools would still be able to pay for teachers and classroom programs.

House Bill 1158, which Representative Hasler authored, gives schools the opportunity to make needed improvements to lighting, heating and cooling systems and other energy-saving repairs. Because these updates aren't paid for by the school General Fund, more money can be diverted to teachers and programs. Despite the failure of the budget bill, these two short term solutions will help to keep our schools intact.

Governor O'Bannon is considering calling the legislature back into session to deal with the budget crisis threatening our schools. Representative Hasler believes it is important that we address this issue this year and is very disappointed that the Senate leadership refused to cooperate with the Governor and the House of Representatives. It remains to be seen whether the Senate will agree to return for a special session to join us in solving this problem.

Housing Trust Fund to improve Evansville neighborhoods

Representative Hasler has long been concerned by the need to promote housing rehabilitation in Evansville's older neighborhoods. He worked with the City Council and Mayor Russell Lloyd to form the Evansville Housing Trust Fund to provide affordable, safe, quality housing in the community.

The demand for rental housing in Indiana has been increasing over the years, while more and more Hoosiers are unable to afford to rent. Over 40 percent of Indiana renters cannot pay the fair market rate for rental housing. Additionally, lower-income Hoosiers are paying a greater percentage of their income for housing than in previous years.

The Evansville Housing Trust Fund was created with \$100,000 in State Build Indiana Fund monies secured by Representative Hasler, matched by \$400,000 from the City. Representative Hasler and city officials are calling upon Evansville's banking community to match dollar for dollar the \$500,000 pledged to date to create an initial fund of \$1

million. The Fund is only the third in the state, similar to programs in Bloomington and Fort Wayne.

Representative Hasler also authored legislation establishing state guidelines for the creation of a Housing Trust Fund Board. The Board conducts public input sessions as well as develops guidelines for the distribution of grants and loans to organizations involved in the rehabilitation of existing housing or building new affordable housing.

If we are to meet the need for affordable housing, we must provide financial assistance to not-for-profit organizations and for-profit companies to ease the way for them to rehab and construct quality housing.



Rep. Hasler discusses legislation with Lt. Governor Joe Kernan.

Legislature takes action against terrorism

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, officials across the country took a serious look at the ability of local emergency systems to respond to a similar threat. The members of the Indiana General Assembly passed several laws during this session to help meet the challenge of our new defense requirements.

House Bill 1001 establishes a Counter-Terrorism and Safety Council (C-TASC) that will serve as the coordinating state agency for emergency management responses to terrorist acts. Chaired by the lieutenant governor, the council will develop anti-terrorism strategy, including placing an affiliate of the council in each county, coordinating efforts with the U.S. Office of Homeland Security, and implementing counterterrorism training in the state law enforcement academy.

The bill also outlines penalties for several terroristic acts, including possession of a weapon of mass destruction and money laundering to support terrorist activities. Part of a \$1.25 BMV service charge will be used to develop an integrated wireless public safety system to help connect agencies across the state in case of an attack.

Senate Bill 10 addresses aircraft offenses. It permits the use of reasonable force to stop a person from hijacking or seizing unlawful control of an aircraft in flight. The bill also makes it a felony to enter a secured area of an airport, use force or violence to hijack an aircraft in flight or commit criminal confinement on an aircraft.

Last year's anthrax scare evidenced the need for greater security against chemical and biological warfare. House Bill 1029 requires the adoption of rules to establish training and certification standards to allow emergency medical technicians in certain counties to administer antidotes for exposure to VX nerve agents.

While we fervently hope never to need to implement these provisions, we know that it is far better to have emergency systems and legislation in place than to struggle with events as they are happening. Finally, for those personally affected by the events of September 11, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 50, which excludes from state income tax any compensation paid to an attack victim's spouse or child.



The American flag in the rotunda of the Statehouse.



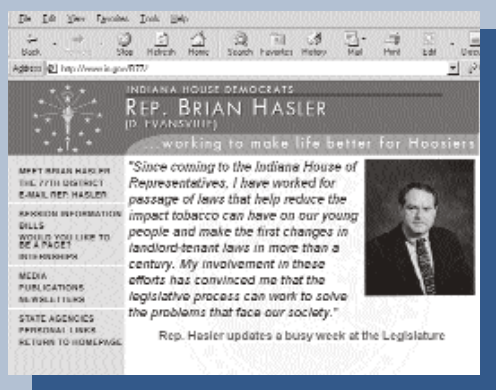
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Hasler helps create model landlord-tenant laws

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In 1999 Representative Hasler had a dramatic impact on landlord tenant relations, making the first significant changes in landlord-tenant law in 118 years. Seeking to stabilize and improve the neighborhoods of Evansville by assuring that both residents and property were well cared for, Representative Hasler authored House Enrolled Act 1653. This law protected tenants against unannounced changes to rental agreements and being denied access to their residence, and gave landlords provisions to expedite court proceedings against tenants.

The law also protected residents from actions by landlords that could be dangerous, including changing locks, removing doors or shutting off utilities, while defining circumstances under which landlords may seize a tenant's personal property as

a lien against unpaid rent.

The legislature built on that law's success with a new law this year, authored by Representative John Day (D-Indianapolis). This law, House Bill 1013, outlines the obligations and remedies for tenants and landlords in the event of a dispute.

For example, the tenant must keep the rental area clean and refrain from defacing, damaging or destroying the premises. The landlord must comply with all health and housing codes and keep all utility systems in safe and working condition, among other obligations.

Representative Hasler's earlier bill and House Bill 1013 together complete the uniform commercial code. With the passage of these bills, Indiana has established model landlord-tenant reforms being adopted across the country.